Week-End Edition
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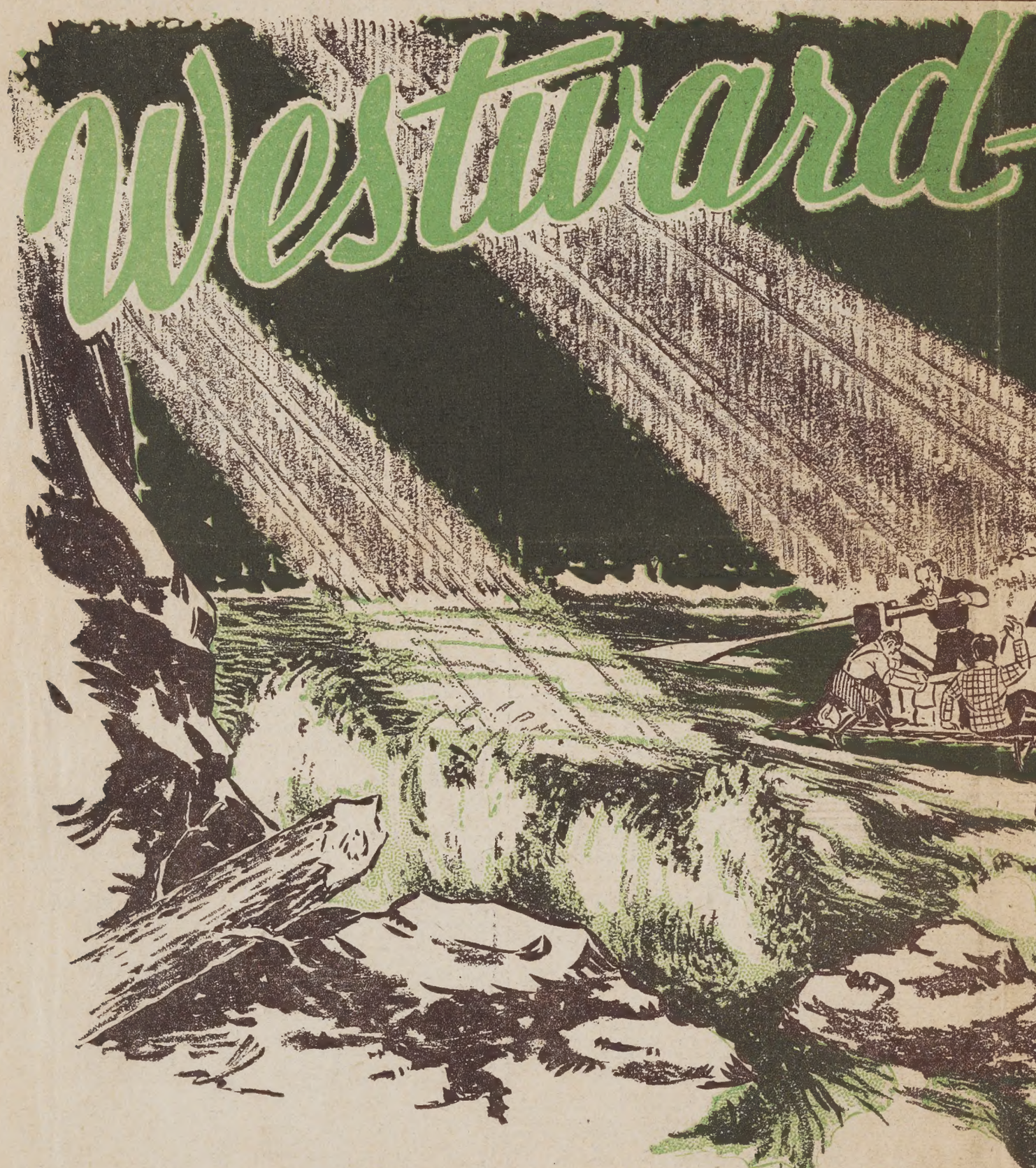
The Sun

Westward



PIONEERS' SAGA OF THE 60's

diaries, and through the careful research of the late Dr. M. S. Wade of Kamloops who himself not many years later travelled the same ground afoot these and

nday Sun

Vancouver, B. C.
November 14, 1936

GOLD AHEAD!

The river narrowed with frightful velocity. . . . The raft in the lead was caught. . . . Some made the shore, others were rescued later, but one man lost his life.

Grim Hardships

Heavy rains, clothes wet to the skin, muddy camp grounds, swollen rivers and myriads of mosquitos were ently very deep. A Mr. Cogswell and myself were the only persons in advance of the train, so after a few minutes' hesitation we

HOW DEATH AND DANGER DOGGED THE TREK FOR GOLD THEY DID NOT FIND

By RONALD WHITE

GOLD in Cariboo! That was the call that three-quarters of a century ago led to one of the greatest epics of Canadian history—the overland trek of scores of fortune seekers from Ontario and Quebec to the gold fields beyond the far Rockies.

It was a journey of unknown hardships undertaken by inexperienced men from all walks of life. Swollen and impassable rivers, weeks of rain when clothes were never dry, piercing the Rockies with food supplies exhausted, clinging to precipices, caught on rafts by raging, tumbling waters, death—these were experiences little dreamed of by the exuberant and excited groups laying plans beside their eastern home fires in the winter of 1861-62.

With spring in the air and hope high in their hearts, there were many gatherings at railway stations that April of 1862 as friends and families wished the fortune-seekers good luck and a safe return.

The first part of the journey was by established rail and steamer routes through United States territory to St. Paul; thence by river boat and stage coach to Fort Garry, the real "jumping off" place into unknown country.

During those first days on the trail there was consolidating of parties, election of leaders, and group organization going on. Fortunately there were among the adventurers a few who kept other sources were brought to light and the material sorted and compiled as a memoir of the British Columbia archives. Through the kind permission of the provincial archivist appear quotations from that work.

Terrible Massacre

Traveling across the Canadian prairies was a wearisome journey for the overlanders of '62, entailing hardship and difficulties.

But its peacefulness was in marked contrast to the American migration over the Oregon Trail — when caravans were harassed and many pioneers massacred by marauding Indians. Theirs was a trail of gunfire and blood along which even the military forts could not ensure safety.

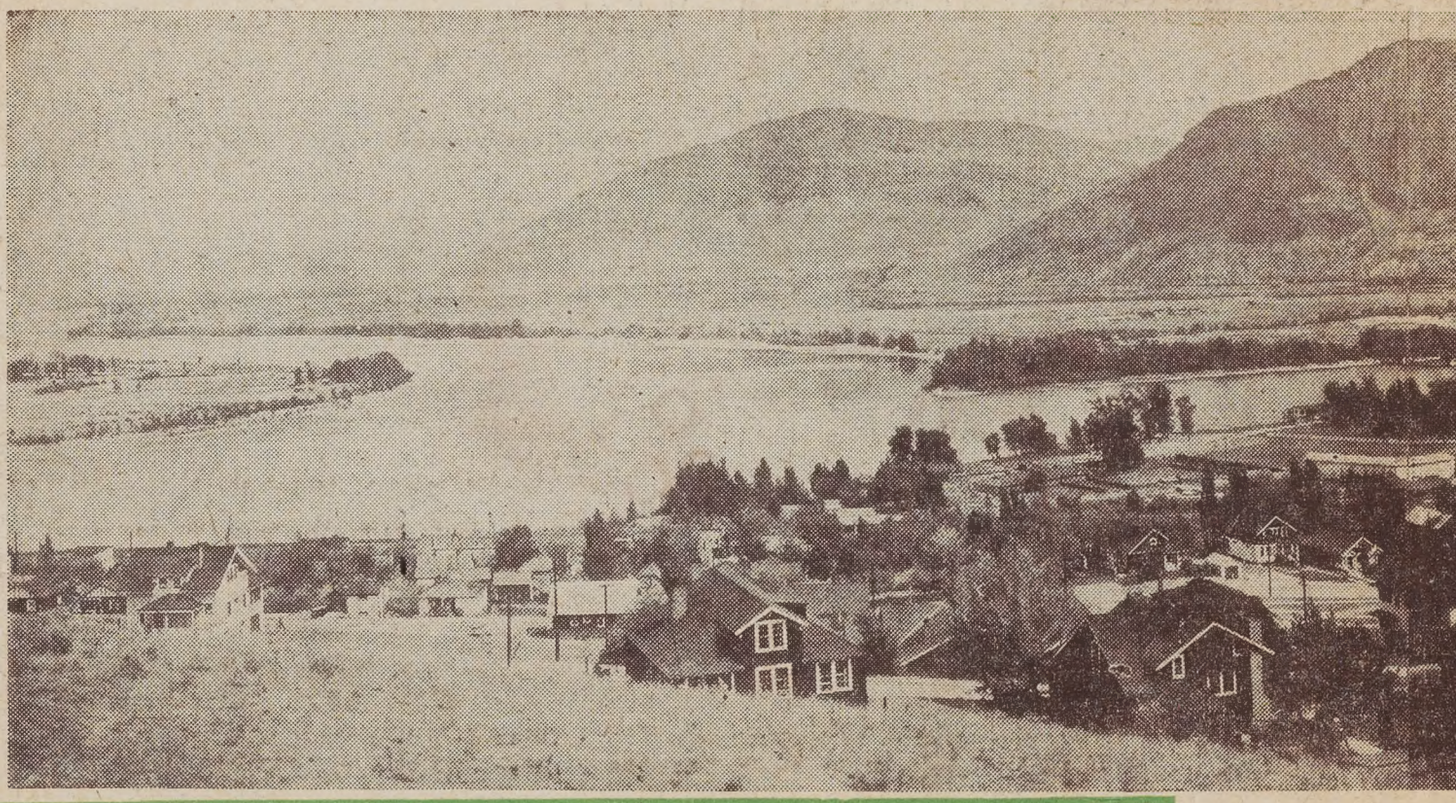
But not one of the Canadian groups was molested by Indians anywhere along the entire route, although in that same year, just to the south, occurred the terrible wholesale massacre of Minnesota settlers.

MRS. HENRY SWANSON

The first white child born in British Columbia, her parents being members of one of the parties trekking westward—as narrated in this article.

At Red River Settlement, it should be said, several joined the gold seekers. Among them were Mr. and Mrs. August Schubert and three children, the oldest of whom was only six. Mrs. Schubert was the only woman in the entire company and bore her hardships in a manner that was the admiration of all.

This is an epic of hardy pioneers who overcame indescribable hardships in a westward trek by foot Columbia, lured by stories of the Cariboo gold strike, That was three-quarters of a century ago. Most of Kamloops, applying to the industrial life of this prov ation manifested in their heroic westward journey



KAMLOOPS

the greatest worries on the prairie trails. Getting the oxen and Red River carts over unbridged streams was no small task and called for the ingenuity of those in the party who were engineers.

While most streams were forded, once during four days no less than eight bridges up to 100 feet in length, were built.

Another time, when no trees were available for bridge building, "the creek was filled with carts; and then we built a bridge of cart boxes on top," notes John M. Sellar in his diary.

The same chronicler adds, "We started off in the morning in the best of spirits, but in consequence of great rains the travelling was desperate for both cattle and men.

"We pushed on knee-deep in water till 7:20 when all of a sudden we dropped into a creek up to the armpits and as there was no timber about we had to raise our loads on top of our cart boxes. . . .

"About 9 we came to another about 25 feet wide running very swift and apparthe horses in and try the depth, and as his was the tallest, he rode in.

"Scarcely had he entered the water when he bobbed down out of sight and sank till Cogswell was up to his neck, and I thought I would die laughing to see him let the horse go and turn and swim out, gasping for breath, the water was so cold. . . . At 10:15 all safe across."

Some Relaxation

Except under circumstances amounting to an emergency, the Sabbath day was always rigorously observed. Caravans were drawn up and it was a day of rest for man and beast. Simple religious services were held, conducted by various members of the groups. Hymns, a reading from the Scriptures, prayer and a "sermon" concluded the Sunday afternoon in camp.

Relaxation, too, was occasionally enjoyed by the evening campfire, for Sellar again furnishes us with a homely touch: "A meeting was held in the centre of the corral of all musicians, both vocal and instrumental, for the purpose of getting up a musical association. Accordingly an association was formed by some 32 joining themselves together, among whom were four violinists, two flutists and a number of others who played small instruments. We played and sang a number of favorite pieces and then retired for the night."

Trading With Indians

At length, towards the end of June, Fort Edmonton was reached, and spirits mounted with visions of the gold fields and sure riches just beyond the mountains.

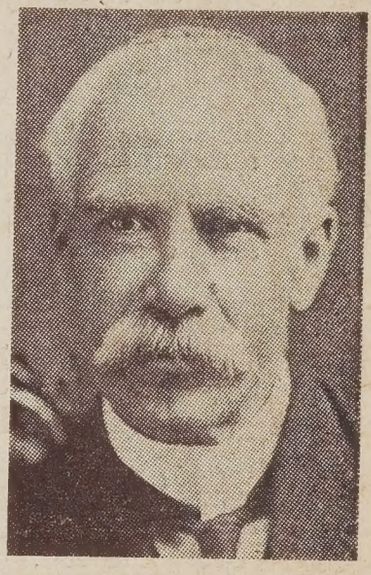
Here the equipment was reduced to a minimum for travelling through the mountains and pack horses replaced Red River carts.

Sellar declared trading with the Indians for a horse outfit to be the most weari-

(Continued on Page Two)

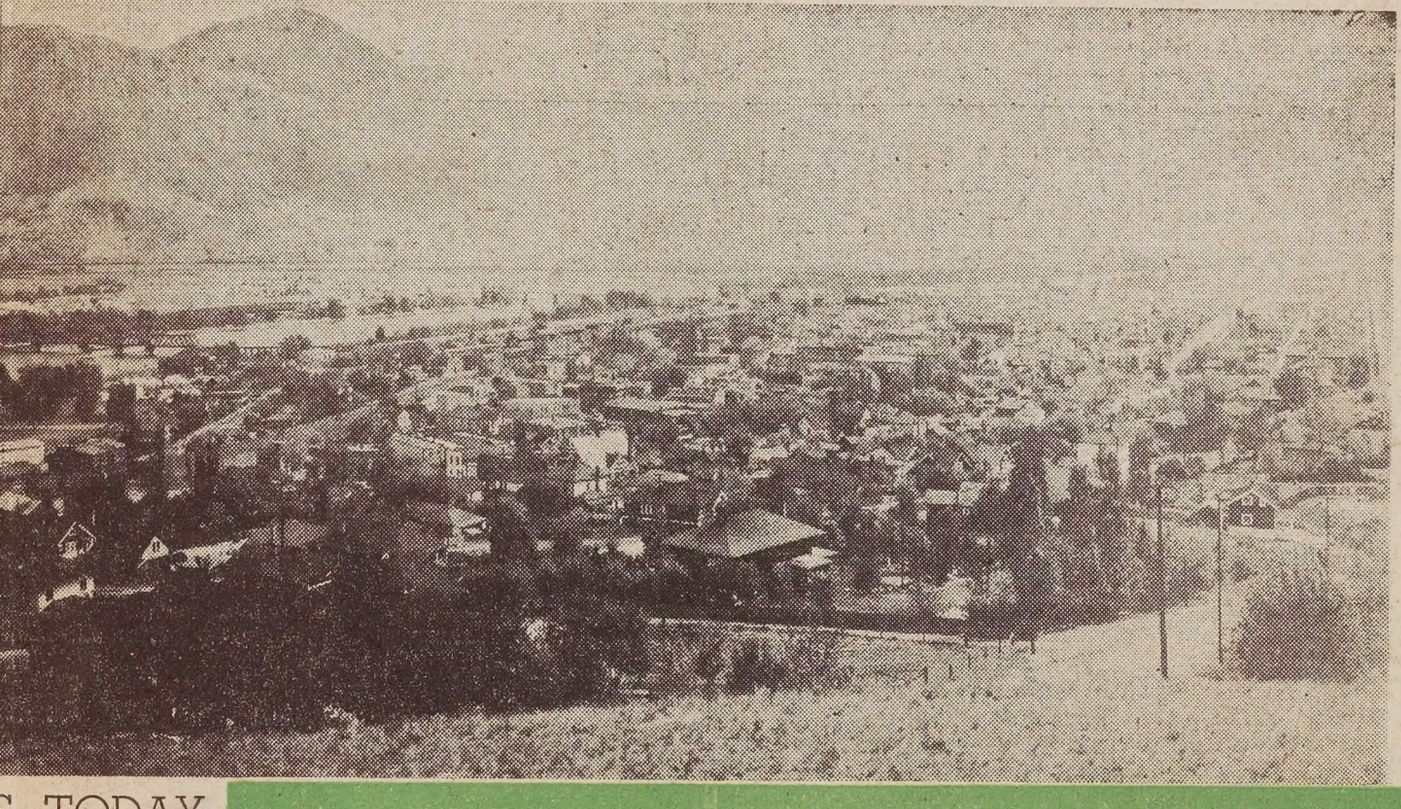
ame tremendous obstacles and encountered almost oot and horse and wagon from the East to British ke, finally to arrive when the gold rush was over. of them settled in British Columbia, some at rovince the same energy and zeal and determinney.

Crossing the prairies was hazarduous work, and the delicate condition of one woman in the party caused considerable worry.



THE LATE DR. M. S. WADE

Who as a labor of love, compiled the memoir of the B. C. Archives, "The Overlanders of '62." He was assisted in the laborious task of deciphering ancient diaries and in many other ways by Mrs. Wade, who lives at 62 St. Paul Street West, Kamloops.



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